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September 1, 1999

Mr. Lester Snow, Executive Director
CALFED Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth St., Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Snow:

I am writing to you about **CALFED's Water plan** for California.

I am very concerned about potential for the misuse of taxpayer money and negative impacts to California's already stressed natural environment. My concerns are based on CALFED's apparent bias that California's water needs must be met by increasing diversions of natural stream and river flows and by building more dams.

CALFED's primary focus for meeting the water needs of the future should be biased towards what is **cost effective** and what is **sustainable** and at a bare minimum should describe the range of alternatives to reduce water demand, thereby freeing up existing supplies of water, without building costly and environmentally damaging new dams. Given the peril of our state's endangered salmon and steelhead populations and the costs to restore sustainable fish populations, CALFED's plans for increased water diversion would greatly undermine these efforts.

It is imperative, that as a minimum requirement CALFED plan should employ environmentally-benign and human-scale solutions before proposing the building of more dams on California's Rivers. California scarcely has a single river left that isn't already plagued and plugged by over **4000** dams!

Demand-Reduction Strategies:

- Agricultural water conservation - Agriculture uses over **80%** of the developed water supply in California. Relatively small changes in agricultural demand can yield tremendous quantities of water. For example, a one to five percent reduction in agricultural demand due to reduction in evaporative losses or other changes in water use could ***generate*** 340,000 - 1,700,000 acre-feet.
- **Market based incentives**
- **Urban water conservation** - Urban residents and businesses can do their part to improve water use efficiency, by choosing efficient appliances and landscaping for their homes. For example, a 20% statewide reduction in landscape water use would yield 520,000-1,400,000 acre-feet. Replacing 50 to 100 percent of the average washing machines in use in 1995 with currently available horizontal axis washing machines could generate 97,000 to 194,000 acre-feet. If businesses become more efficient, they can conserve 350,000 to 650,000 acre-feet of water. Why on earth hasn't Caltrans **mandated** the use of native plants for all landscaping along California's state highways? This would show that state agencies are committed to doing their part about reducing water demand **whenever possible**. Until the state is doing everything possible to conserve water, costly new dams should not even be considered.
- **Wastewater recycling** - By the year 2020, according to CALFED, over 3 million acre-feet of wastewater will be generated annually by urban coastal areas. By CALFED's analysis, California could recycle over half of this, for total of up to 1,720,000 acre-feet in recycled supply.

Supply-related Strategies:

- **Groundwater banking** - During wet years we can save water underground where space has already been created from previous pumping. This water would then be available when most needed, during dry years.
- **Change the operation of existing reservoirs** - Throughout California, more than 4,000 existing dams and reservoirs involving more than 60 million acre feet of combined storage capacity are operated according to outdated, piecemeal rules. Relatively modest changes in how we operate these can do much to improve water supply reliability. Before rushing to build costly new dams and reservoirs, a comprehensive re-assessment of re-operation opportunities is needed.

0427 (2)

SEP 0 3 1999

- **Restore upper watersheds** - Restoration of meadows and denuded hillsides, caused by overgrazing could better retain flood flows, slowly releasing the water over time. Such restoration can help minimize flood damages downstream, while also serving to store floodwaters for use during drier seasons.
- **Change Delta operations** - By taking less water out of the Delta when fish are most vulnerable, and instead pumping at less sensitive times, we could better protect the Delta and water supplies.

Blueprint Recommendations:

- Maximize conservation and recycling potential
- Jump-start groundwater management and appropriate groundwater storage
- Facilitate appropriate water transfers
- Ensure environmental water reliability
- Improve the operation of existing dams and canals
- Develop accurate estimates for current water supply and demand
- Price water to reflect its true economic and environmental value!

CALFED should:

1. Include an accurate analysis of how much water we need now and how much we will need in the future. CALFED overstates our current water use by up to 1.2 million-acre feet (by omitting conservation successes) and bases future estimates on this inaccurate baseline.
2. Recognize that the law of supply and demand applies to water. If taxpayer subsidies were eliminated, demand for water would fall.
3. Analyze promising conservation strategies.
4. Recognize that a restored environment would reduce water supply uncertainty for users.

CALFED should not be in the business of accommodating unsustainable growth, but must operate within the nature's limited resource base and know when to "draw a line in the sand" on growth. Humans have no other option, but to live within the same natural laws as all other living creatures.

The four dams most favored by CALFED with their consequential environmental damages include:

1) **Expansion of Shasta Dam on the Sacramento, McCloud, and Pit Rivers.** (costs between $2 - $6 billion)
   *drowns miles of stream habitat, wetlands, forests, and recreation areas
2) **Expansion of Los Vaqueros Reservoir on Kellogg Creek** (costs between $1.6 and $2.1 billion)
   * destroys habitat for over 39 species
3) **Build Sites Reservoir on Stone Corral and Funks Creeks** (costs between $.45 and $1.7 billion)
   * sucks up to half of the water out of the Sacramento River, devastating four species of Chinook salmon and steelhead
4) **Build Los Banos Grandes Reservoir** (costs between $1 and $1.5 billion)
   * destroys rare woodlands and habitat for 27 endangered or threatened species

Please make **water conservation** and **sustainable water use** a priority for your administration's water policy. Please let me know your position on this issue.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Bryan Gordon

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